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Twinning Social Memory and Social Imaginary: Challenges for East African Media Policies

Up to the early 1990s, the African communication sphere was regularly placed at the bottom of any international evaluation – too little, too urban and too authority-oriented. But then the situation changed. New political winds found their expression in the Windhoek Declaration (1991). Independent media voices emerged. A little later, a surge of information and communication technologies swept over the continent, turning the ambitions towards digital forms of communication. The phenomenon has been called the 'smartphone revolution'. Africans have been ensured access to the Internet, and they have entered the modern world.

But is the revolution really a revolution? Problems and contradictions in the mediascape are still prevalent, and a Habermasian public sphere is hardly available for anyone other than the urban middle and upper classes. Chantal Mouffe (2005) differentiates 'the political' and 'politics', which stands for institutional control and order, while 'the political' means individual's ability to antagonism. Is there space for the political in Africa? Arjun Appadurai (1996) has talked about imagination turning into social practice in global cultural processes. A prerequisite for such a development are social practices designed according to the needs of the society in question. However, as indicated in several studies (Berger, 2007; Rioba, 2009), changes in communication policies tend to be risky in Africa.

Key concepts

The aim of this article is to discuss the communication policies and practices in two neighbouring African countries, namely in Kenya and Tanzania. The discussion is based on the scrutiny of documents and some expert interviews. I defined communication policies as broadly as Freedman, 2008: 17) 'formal as well as informal strategies, underpinned by specific interests, values and goals that shape the emergence of mechanisms designed to structure the direction of and behaviour in particular media environments'. I thus consider that actual media behaviour reflects media policies, although specific policy statements are not defined.

The empirical material is filtered through four key concepts: collective memory, social imaginary, domestication and liminality. My assumption is that the mediascapes in Africa today are moulded by the history of the continent. Both deliberate attempts to develop communication and the actual media and ICT (information and communications technology) practices reflect the past.

The role of *collective memory* or *social memory* – both concepts are used – in media forms and practices and have become popular in recent years (e.g. Zelizer & Tenenboim-Wainblatt, 2014). The shared history that shapes our perception of ourselves is called social memory. Durkheim (1912/1995) noted that societies require continuity and connection with the past to preserve social unity and cohesion. Halbwachs (1952/1992) expanded the idea to 'totems', commemorative events that serve as reminders of a collective memory. Commemorative events reinforce memories that fade away without reinforcement. The collective memory is not an accurate representation of the past but rather a manipulated construction of those who maintain power in

society. Some researchers (e.g. Bodnar, 1993) divide collective memory into two types. *Vernacular memories* are said to originate from the people, while *official memory* is created for the purpose of stabilisation of the status quo. Media contents and especially media policies could be viewed as vehicles for the reinforcing of official collective memory, while the African oral heritage could be assessed as the vernacular dimension.

Collective memory is mostly seen as a 'container' of the nation-state. In recent years, attempts have been made to remove collective memory from the nation-state dimension to 'cosmopolitan memory' (e.g. Levy & Sznaider, 2010; Chouliaraki, 2013; Gabel, 2013), with global-local dynamics and agency. Especially in this kind of framing, the normative character of collective memory is recognised. *Social imaginary* is a concept reflecting on activities that both set human subjects apart from others and also join them. Castoriadis (1975: 224) talks about ' the central imaginary significations of a society [...] are the laces which tie a society together and the forms which define what, for a given society, is "real"'. In this text, I try to search those historical laces which Sub-Saharan African societies have engraved in their present-day communication.

Domestication is an operational concept for assessing how many genuinely domestic perspectives are integrated in cultural phenomena adopted from abroad. Domestication (Silverstone, 1992; Helle-Valle & Slettemeås, 2008) is understood as a process of 'taming' new media forms or technology for use in a particular society. In this article, domestication is used in the meaning of 'taming the wild and cultivating the tame' (Silverstone, 1994: 174). Cultural policy researchers have analysed the local adjustment of transnational models. According to them, local activities are standardised during a process of domestication, but localism is persistent, bringing into the adaptation even 'banal' local elements. However, when applied to the field of communication, the emergence of local elements is not self-evident. For example, ICT adoption is a rigid process, demanding a series of technological solutions.

With the *liminality* thesis, I try to find out whether the recent plans about communication policies have driven Africans to a drastic change in social behaviour and media habits. Liminality is a concept used in anthropology (e.g. Turner, 1974) and literary theory to depict a state which is situated in between other spaces, periods or identities. The foundational metaphor is 'threshold'. As dawn and dusk hold liminal positions between night and day, liminality defies boundaries and erases differences. The usage of the term has broadened to describe political and cultural change. During liminal periods, social hierarchies may be reversed or temporarily dissolved, the continuity of tradition may become uncertain and future outcomes once taken for granted may be thrown into doubt. The claim here is that in the present-day African situation, not only are media and communication use changed, but social hierarchies might also become reversed.

My research question is both broad and diffuse. The aim of this article is simply (a) to elaborate on the space and forms of social memory found in the media performance and communication ideals in Eastern Africa, especially Kenya and Tanzania and (b) to find out what kind of intellectual mechanisms are used in such processes. My assumption is that the present-day media performances are 'layered', a result of a succession of selected elements of social memory. Depending on the past, various African mediascapes represent different forms of social imaginary today. Jo Helle-Valle (2017) quite justifiably emphasizes that media should not be placed in the centre when media use is studied. People's everyday lives should be the point of departure.

The reason for selecting Kenya and Tanzania as the targets of the empirical analysis is the fact that the two neighbouring countries have both strong similarities and differences. The empirical analysis is far from systematic. A 'proper' empirical analysis would demand much more than my haphazard notions based on careful reading of the documents, which have been part of my previous works in the field[1]. Thus, the following reflections are based on fairly large empirical materials. The method used in the empirical analysis for this article is close reading, and the emphasis is on the search for theoretical reflections, not details.

In short, the article provides observations about the East African mediated communication and a testing ground for various interpretations which have been maturing in my mind during previous work in the field and while reading the piles of documents for this particular study. The number of exact references have been minimized, because practically every second sentence would require a reference, if the conventional rules of social science research would have followed.

The past: Media from colonisers to colonisers, variation in message modes

The Congo Conference (1884-5) divided the African continent between the colonial powers and established the colonial rule in Africa (Sturmer, 1998, p. 9). Colonial powers also influenced the development of an authoritarian press concept and the muffling down of indigenous forms of communication (e.g. Faringer, 1991; Esipisu & Kariitthi, 2007). The goals were, primarily, to provide news and information to European civil servants and business people in the country and, only secondly, to promote literacy and rural development plus to counter nationalistic movements among Africans. Africans were not the primary audience.

The first African journalism emerged in West Africa, in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the early 19th century. The first ones were government-owned papers, but soon also missionaries and returning freed slaves started to launch papers. According to Faringer (1991), the British pursued rather libertarian ideas about the press, while the rule of the French in West Africa was closely related to the French culture and its media traditions.

Some researchers (e.g. Burton, 1979) assert that one of the reasons why Britain's West African colonies achieved independence before East Africa was exactly the virile nationalistic press on the West coast. East African newspapers were what Faringer (1991, pp. 9–16) calls 'Africanised' versions of papers established by European interest groups and missionaries. The weak African press in East Africa was mainly staffed by politicians, who lacked training in journalism. The quality of journalism remained modest although motivation was high. Asians owned the printing presses, and Europeans supplied advertising revenue. In addition, the British came to East Africa in great numbers, and thus a 'settler' press which carried news from Britain found a large audience.

[1] Kivikuru 2009, Kivikuru 2013, Kivikuru 2015, Kivikuru 2016, Kivikuru 2017. Especially in Kivikuru 2013 and 2016, Tanzanian mediascape and media policies are analysed, based on historical reviews and quantitative content analysis. In Kivikuru 2015, community media are discussed. Kivikuru 2017 comprises an analysis of more than 70 Kenyan information policy documents.

The centre of British colonies in East Africa was Kenya, and there especially Mombasa (Faringer 1991). The press started to flourish there around the turn of the 20th century. Kenya's register of newspapers soon included hundreds of titles, though many were tiny newssheets. Colonial authorities, missions but also the business community published newspapers. The present dominant Kenyan media groups originate from those years. The first indigenously owned paper (*Mwigwithania*) was launched by the Kikuyu Central Association in 1928, and its role was distinctly nationalistic. The editor was Johnstone Kamau, later to be known as Jomo Kenyatta. After the Second World War, the African press, operating in various vernacular languages, started to mushroom in Kenya. All these papers were nationalist and militant, but circulations remained modest.

The situation of Tanzania differed from Kenya, first because of the complicated colonial history of Tanganyika—first a German colony, then a British protectorate – and second, because of the two totally different media histories of mainland Tanganyika and Zanzibar. A German based newspaper law was put into practice in 1912. It had minimal impact on media development, because the phase of British protectorate started already in 1916. However, the system of government newsletters originates from the German period. (Sturmer, 1998, pp. 42-49)

In Tanganyika and Zanzibar, the development of the press could be described as a story of delay. Papers were many but small, both in Dar es Salaam and in Tanga. They came out in five different languages: German, English, Kiswahili, Gujarati and Arabic. During the German phase the settler community was kept small, but the situation changed when the British period started. World War II meant a strong but short push forward for the Kiswahili press. The government started dozens of regional papers in Kiswahili. In the 1950s, these papers occasionally presented mild criticism against the colonial masters. (Sturmer, 1998, pp. 30-69)

Kenya became the first British colony to begin regular broadcasts in 1928. In British colonies, the structure of broadcasting services was designed along the model of the BBC (Esipisu & Kariitthi, 2007, p. 35). According to Ansah (1985, pp. 3–15), the programme content was a combination of education and news, news for the British in the country and education to help teachers in schools. The role of the teachers was to mediate the useful messages to students at schools. As Nyamnjoh (2005, pp. 38–46) has said, France and Britain established radio stations to provide their citizens with information from home but also to consolidate their position in the colonies and to disseminate their values among the 'natives'.

In sum, the early East African press was divided into European-owned city papers and rural papers run by ministries, sometimes in vernacular languages. In addition, missionaries published their papers mainly in vernaculars. Soon after the take-off of the press, territories instituted strict laws regulating the right of Africans to run newspapers. The idea was to stifle the spread of 'subversive' political tones in the papers. Francis Nyamnjoh (2005, pp. 40–41) states that the colonised – those to be developed via the rural press – were not allowed to determine about what to learn.

The last years of colonialism offered imposed collective memories, created by colonisers and claiming that European and African interests were the same. This could be viewed as forced – and false – domestication. There were differences between Kenya and Tanganyika. In Kenya, the media started to develop fast and some media soon turned commercially successful. As everywhere else, emerging business and trade demanded intensified communication. Not only the

political power controlled the media, but also the business community. However, the distance to the ordinary person remained wide.

The rigid control of the media made it difficult for liberation leaders to articulate their anti-colonial opinions via the press. Subsequently, during the independence struggle, the media were perceived as being secondarily important (Hyden & Okigbo, 2002). Nationalist leaders, planning mass movements, ended up with direct communication with the people through political rallies.

In this phase, the weak Tanzanian mediascape appeared slightly more domesticated than the Kenyan, but it was also loaded with bureaucracy which did not support the media reality. This was a dangerous legacy: politically, you had to follow orders, but media philosophy you could forget. In Kenya, the settler community was larger, offering an audience for the media, which soon became financially successful. At this stage, ethnic contradictions remained to a large extent outside the mediascape. The media were predominantly private, while in Tanzania, a variety of government organs stood behind the media.

The official social memory was top/down and set by outsiders in both countries. The vernacular social memory was predominantly based on individuals' own experiences and the oral culture outside the media sphere. Underground activities and political rallies could function as commemorative events, engraved in the collective memory of the people, although they were not covered by the media. It can be imagined that the emerging liberation movements created liminality among the population at large. Thus far, the colonial rule had given the ordinary person only the role of an object. Now s/he was invited to have a voice, via supporting liberation leaders.

Media in nation-building: Great hopes and development but still top/down

> Development brings freedom, provided it is development of people. But people cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create in himself by his own actions. […] A man develops himself by joining in free discussion of a new venture, and participating in the subsequent decision; he is not developed if he is herded like an animal into the new venture. (Nyerere, 1968, pp. 27–28)

After independence, strong leaders – above all in Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana and Senegal – drafted declarations about the role of the media and journalism. In Tanzania, extensive blueprints about how the media should be arranged in the future were designed (Ng'wanakilala, 1981, pp. 17-21). Nyerere presented his media philosophy in the declaration about the nationalisation of a private newspaper, *The Standard*. As Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Jomo Keniatta in Kenya and Leopold Senghor in Senegal designed a significant role for the media in social planning.

In fact, the situation turned to the opposite. The weak media had a great role in the struggle for independence neither in Kenya nor in Tanzania, and, accordingly, media were considered secondary in processes of development also, although they were present in the independence rhetoric, for example in the Arusha Declaration (1967) in Tanzania. The emphasis in social planning was on very basic issues – economy, education, health, land ownership, plus nation-building and

Pan-Africanism. Democracy was a frequently used word in official documents and speeches, but it remained an abstract term, as did freedom. The only clear principle was that the media were to assist in the construction of a new nation. Without exception, broadcasting companies were put under government rule and most major newspapers nationalised to ensure the nation-construction process. In Kenya, the private press survived.

Anti-colonial campaigns were started in Ghana to assist in the political liberation of the African countries which were still colonised. The solidarity mode was adopted by East African states, and especially strong it became in Tanzania.

The media were given scarce resources in Tanzania to complete its ambitious tasks. The country had two dailies and a few weeklies, operating from Dar es Salaam and mainly in English; the change compared with the latest stage of colonialism was marked. Television was not allowed on mainland Tanzania; it was expected to bring dependency on foreign programmes. Radio was the main medium, and it covered the country quite well.

The nationalisation of media companies was put into in full in Tanzania, partly in Kenya. National news agencies grew out of the pre-independence information services. In Kenya, the private press kept its status though also government communication was strengthened. The Kenyan situation was ideologically complex. The dilemma of centralism versus regionalism created debates, and the country experienced tension between supporters of a communal or socialist path and proponents of more individualised and capitalist approaches. There were competing narratives of history, and the media partly reflected them. Thus, there was more space for alternative voices.

Only rarely did policy statements have any real impact on the media reality in the two countries. In the name of nation-building, the use of vernaculars in the media was not favoured. In general, the main language of the media was the colonial language, considered more neutral than any of the vernaculars, which were anticipated to promote tribalism.

Post-colonial governments found it natural to justify why broadcasting needed public control, which led to state monopoly in Tanzania. Funding, educational goals and technology were frequently used as reasons for keeping broadcasting under state control. Governments claimed that once their states had become mature and stable, they would release the grip over broadcasting and promote pluralism and diversity. But during the first years of independence, the role reserved for broadcasting was to operate as a vehicle of nation-building.

The time was characterised by great hopes and modest accomplishments. Especially in Tanzania, the developmentalist state was promoted. In Kenya, there was more operational space for the print media. Concerning radio, a variety of creative solutions to increase education in literacy, health and agriculture were developed, mainly on national basis but acknowledging the need to come closer to the ordinary person. However, within a few years after independence, especially Tanzanian mainstream media started to resemble ‘protocol news’, typically working for national government priorities. That happened also to a certain extent in Kenya, where the press remained predominantly in private hands.

In sum, this phase put a strong emphasis on the imposition of collective memories from above, but those manipulating the memories were now domestic leaders. Despite frequent remarks about

democracy, the first years of independence in the mediascapes of the two republics can hardly be called democratic; new leaders developed collective memories mainly based on abstract slogans. The role of Pan-Africanism was complex, and it was especially strong in Tanzania. The ideology remained abstract in the media, but it certainly created curiosity, perhaps also affection and solidarity. Africanism was a new horizon for ordinary Africans, those days keenly tied to their own communities. For the liberation movements operating in different countries, the broadcast time allowed for them was crucial, the only way to keep contact with their countrymen in diaspora. It could be claimed that only through tightly regulated broadcasting could commemorative events about Pan-Africanism be organised.

In East Africa, a specific dimension of African cooperation was the East African Community. Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda had a long history of cooperation under successive regional integration arrangements, starting with a customs union in 1917. The first formal round of the East African Community started in 1967 and lasted for 10 years. The phase was filled with contradictions and accuses of Kenyan dominance, but for the media sphere, the Community meant a start of print media cooperation covering all the three countries. Most East African papers had their base in Kenya.

One could imagine that after a few years of independence, with the glory of the struggle gone, signs of despair and liminality met the ordinary person. His/her daily life did not change much, and the social order in the surroundings remained the same; however, demands for political activity and concrete changes in one's life were promoted by the media, mass organisations and extension workers. As such, the suggested political activity was easy, predominantly involving attendance in mass meetings, not expressing one's opinions through the media. The development part was more complicated: one was urged to learn to read and write, to change agricultural practices, to eat differently and exercise birth control. The Nyamnjoh (2005) dilemma prevailed: those to be developed were not allowed to determine the content of what to be informed about.

Radio – also in Kenya, predominantly public radio – was the medium for this phase. Broadcasting reached the ordinary person quite well, but it opened only a one-way street, top/own. The broadcasting did its best to create commemorative events, especially in Tanzania, where the nation-building and development rhetoric was stronger than in Kenya with tensions among ethnic groups. Attempts to localization via radio fora were made, but they were not successful. Nation-building preached for uniformity. In Tanzania, the demand was stronger. However, the dominant party paper in Tanzania differed politically from the government paper; the relationship was occasionally quite complicated. Kiswahili had a role in developmental broadcasting.

Measured by volume, East African media did not grow much during the first decades of independence, but the tone differed distinctly from previous media content. The role given to the media was in Tanzania strongly developmental, in Kenya, the private media were interested also in economy and politics. Still, the media mainly gave space to the elites – now national elites. In this phase, the Tanzanian media – still very weak – made a quick and dramatic turn from a scattered multi-lingual mediascape to English-language dominance, while in Kenya, there was much more continuity. The Tanzanian case appears as far more contradictory. In Zanzibar, calls for continuity and uniformity were even stronger than in the mainland. Thus, the delicate media question was deliberately left outside union matters, when the union of the two was established. Accordingly, the mediascapes remained divided.

One-party and SAP: Multiple media but placed in the margins

By 1970, the major newspapers across the African continent were government-owned. Only South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria accommodated private press. It has been said that in Africa, a 'culture of silence' was re-imposed by military dictatorships or autocratic one-party states. Towards the 1980s, a change was emerging, via private radio stations and papers. In the late 1980s, a number of new commercial media wiped over the continent, although audience figures remained limited, and the change did not extend beyond urban areas.

As contradictory as it might sound, at the same time the period meant the deterioration of the role of the media. The optimism of nation-building years was gone, the results of successful development were few and bureaucracy grew. Big clumsy public broadcasting companies could not compete in popularity with private stations which played western popular music. National pride was a factor promoting television in Kenya. Its emergence – public and private television alike -- developed a growing demand for programmes, and programmes were expensive to produce. The dependency on foreign supplies Nyerere had warned about became a reality.

With weakening economies across the continent, Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) became crucial for African states, Kenya and Tanzania included. For Tanzania, the situation was especially harsh. During the 1980s, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) attached conditions to their loans to countries in economic trouble. The loan packages for Sub-Saharan countries included the condition that the governments accepted SAP. SAP did not pay attention to media or public information at all. (Etta, 2005)

The professional education of journalists started in those days. Curricula were copied from institutions in the former colonial states, and young Africans received scholarships for studies in the West. Textbooks as well as journalistic ideals were adopted from the previous colonial masters (Golding & Elliott, 1979). The debate around the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was heated in the international arenas in Paris and New York, but East African media and journalists did not yet recognise that war as theirs.

In sum, the period in question offers an ambitious task for an analyst. On one hand, some space was opening for a variety of opinions because of the expansion of private media. Critical tones were often extended to extremes, and muffled scandals from the past were publicised especially in Tanzania, where the media control had been tight. On the other hand, the dominant modes of journalism were still reporting on government affairs, development projects and the doings of leaders. (Konde, 1984)

An interesting trait was the downfall of Pan-Africanism. Public radio companies still gave air space for southern African liberation movements but with decreased volumes. With the exception of the defunct East African Community area, Kenyans and Tanzanians did not know much about what was happening in the neighbouring countries. There was no longer space for a social imaginary about Pan-Africanism.

East Africanism experienced a new start, officially in 1999 and Rwanda and Burundi gradually joining the group, but the negotiations began already in the mid-1980s. Now Tanzania became the dominant state in the Union, mainly due to its large population and vested interests. The headquarters were placed in Arusha, Tanzania. However, the objectives of the second round have been more modest than in the first phase. The Union has been successful as a customs union, while the deeper regional integration process remains marginal. In the media sphere, joint

exercises in the field of print media continued and developed, based on private interests. A joint East African Anthem was officially accepted as late as in 2010. Somehow, the domestication of even limited Africanism did not appear significant.

Another 'order' emerged from outside the mediascape. With worsening economies, political leaders were forced to put their focus on the direction which was demanded by the World Bank and the IMF. The media were not considered important for national macro-economy and, accordingly, especially the Tanzanian media operated with very scarce resources. They were again pushed in the margins of social development.

An interesting dimension for this period was the professional sphere, which was not at all domesticated. Professional ideals and journalistic training found their contents from abroad, and a clash between 'true' professionalism and newsroom reality was distinct. Accordingly, among professionals the lack of media freedom was anchored to the politics of the country even when economy could have been accused. National governments inherited the controller role which earlier belonged to the colonial masters. Toward the end of the 1980s, the political control of the media was loosening in Tanzania, while in Kenya the space for discussion expanded carefully. The growing private media had continuous fights with the government, but despite big headlines, the disagreements did not much affect the media activity. In Tanzania and especially in Zanzibar, banning of newspapers continued.

Present past and present: New rhetoric, new dimensions, limited scale

The 1990s brought radical changes to African mediascapes. Countries governed by one dominant party changed to multi-party systems, and the media started to expound a strong rhetoric of freedom. Private media emerged everywhere and easily found foreign support – radio stations and small-circulation publications most frequently called 'independent' instead of 'private' or 'commercial', as they would have been called in Europe. The Windhoek Declaration (1991) became a symbol of the new era, placing democracy and freedom of expression entirely in the sphere of private media. The change was dramatic in Tanzania, but touched also Kenya. In Tanzania, a merry-go-round of journalists leaving public media and joining new private media created a professional chaos.

A new form of public communication received easily foreign funding: community media. Community radio seemed to represent democracy, participation and developmental interests at the local level – everything that had been missing. Foreign donors, feeling uneasy about dealing with state apparatuses, gladly invested in small studios; after the investment, the medium was expected to operate without money on a voluntary basis. In Zambia, South Africa and Ghana, community media have flourished. Both in Kenya and Tanzania, they got started, but have not really taken off. There are exceptions, in radically different cultures like in Tanzania in the Masai areas, in Kenya in other tribal areas demanding recognition. However, community media operated and still operate isolated from the rest of the media.

In Kenya, the Media Complaints Commission has finally taken off, while in Tanzania, the Media Council (MCT) has operated well for more than 15 years. It has a recognized status in the media circles. Instead, the connection to ordinary citizens still remains distant. The difference is quite interesting, perhaps a reflection of the dramatic change in the media climate in Tanzania.

In the two countries, media titles have multiplied, but circulation and coverage have not grown proportionately, especially in Tanzania. On a systems level, the media mode inherited from previous phases of social history changes slowly. The old mode often reproduces itself in new media titles even though these titles claim to follow a different logic. The media still tend to focus on capital cities and major financial centres, and they still tend to follow political leaders' activities in detail.

However, something has changed in conventional journalism: the language used in the media has received attention. Most often, the debate has been limited to broadcasting, which has been more directly under public control. In Ethiopia, the increased use of Amharic has been fiercely resisted, while in Kenya and Tanzania, Kiswahili is considered 'ethnically neutral'. However, despite the experienced national unity and mobilisation factor, the position of Kiswahili has not been promoted in Kenya to the same extent as in Tanzania, where 85–90% of the media now use Kiswahili. (Musau, 1999) The situation in Kenya is interesting: in radio and television, the language policy appears relaxed, while the 'serious' dailies stick to English. The language is not their only elite characteristic – also the news criteria indicate that the papers talk to those in power.

The use of Kiswahili is start for voicing (Couldry, 2010), because the population now understands what the media are talking about. Not only the language has changed but the vocabulary as well. Tabloids tend to use simple, concrete words and straightforward phrases. As Martín-Barbéro (1997) has pointed out, light media products teach people how to 'walk in the city' – that is, to find one's function in an urban environment. Tanzanian Kiswahili tabloids operate as urban guides. On the other hand, a limitation of the strong national language is its firewall character. With the exception of Kenya, Tanzanians are today more culturally isolated from its neighbours than before.

After the first boom of freedom rhetoric, totally new forms of mediated expression started to emerge in the mediascapes. Their tone is light and entertaining even though the message might be serious, even oppositional – this is new in East Africa.

A form of development-related entertainment is the caricature, which is strong both in Kenya and Tanzania (Gathara & Wanjau, 2009). In Tanzania, Kiswahili rap, *Bongo Flava*, has been popular for a long time, but recently it has also spread to neighbouring countries (Stroeken, 2005). In Uganda, young broadcasters calling themselves 'rap-orters' are changing the way news is delivered with a weekly television bulletin, *NewzBeat* on NTV[2]. *NewzBeat* discusses 'difficult' themes such as corruption, homosexuality, AIDS or political opposition. In Uganda as in Kenya and Tanzania, the youth population takes little interest in public affairs, but the programme has become popular.

Rap has increasing access in both urban and rural areas in East Africa. Politicians release rap music before elections. Verses of protest blast from the speakers of music shops and commuter vans. 'People of all ages share with Kiswahili rappers the satisfaction of expressing themselves on a variety of problems', says Stroeken (2005). Besides rap, phone-in programmes also provide the ordinary person a route to express him/herself, and people no longer have difficulty in identifying themselves on air (Gekao, personal interview, 2015).

[2] NTV is a private television company in Kampala. It is a subsidiary of Nation Media Group.

The African mobile phone revolution has received much attention especially in Kenya. Almost two-thirds of the population has access to the internet (Communications Authority of Kenya) – how regular that is, is another thing, but radio listening has, to a large extent, moved from radio set to mobile phones, and online services are available for the common person. Ironically as such, the most successful ICT based projects in the African ICT hub so far have taken off as private initiatives, without government policy statements. *M-Pesa* allows people to command their money fluently with a mobile phone, *Totohealth* improves their possibility to get better health care. *Ushahidi* is an open source project which was started after the post-election demonstrations in Kenya but operates today globally. It allows users to crowdsource crisis information via the mobile phone. However, one government-initiated service has taken off well: *Huduma Centres*. They are county-based 'one-stop shops' to access and pay for government services electronically.

ICT based services are strongly supported by the Kenyan government, while the media sphere is taken with care. Media development has remained separate from national ICT policies, although media and the ICT are under the same ministry. Of course, big media companies have of their own initiative established websites, opened blogs and discussion columns as well as SMS pages. However, the potential of digitality has not been used much for expanding local coverage in the media (Kandie, personal information, 2015).

A reason for the public carefulness perhaps is that the online culture has grown in significance especially in cities. It has been said that the mobilisation of the demonstrations after 2007 elections was partly made with SMS messages and the social media (Mäkinen & Kuira, 2008), and more recently, some protests have become symbols of social media culture and online resistance in Kenya. Social media sites have played a significant role in such – mainly Nairobi-based – protests as 'Occupy parliament', 'My dress my choice', and 'Occupy playground'.

In all the above aspects, Tanzania represents a totally different case. Internet access hardly reaches to one-third of the population, and although there are online groups especially in cities, their significance is minimal – *M-Pesa* is largely used though. Diaspora citizens are able to follow online versions of newspapers and radio and TV stations, but there is not much tolerance toward online activism. It has frequently become a target of authorities following in detail formulations of the Tanzania's Electronic and Postal Communications Act (2010). Criticising the president or supporting homosexuality brings individuals easily to court both in mainland and in Zanzibar.

In sum, representatives of the conventional mediascapes in Africa tend to claim that everything has changed since the 1990s. This is not true, because the reach of the media is still quite limited and urban. However, more space has been given to the social imaginary and people's own voices (Couldry, 2010). Although the voices still predominantly belong to the privileged, they also belong to the youth. This means that a liminality dimension is emerging – the youth has a pinched voice in a culture which traditionally respects seniors. The 'born free' generations are generally not interested in public issues. Consequently, the social media and rap might become important. However, more conventional forms of journalism have also become more inclusive due to tabloidisation. In the Kiswahili region, the journalistic culture has with changed language and vocabulary reached the ordinary person. As in South Africa, the boom of tabloid journalism could be seen as supporting democracy and expanding media freedom (Wasserman, 2010). Surprisingly, localism has not grown much in the media landscape.

Online activity has brought a new dimension of self-expression in Kenyan urban communities, and in the long run, the ICT based services can be expected to strengthen citizenship. The aim of *Huduma Centres* is to help people living outside the cities, also cut bureaucracy and corruption. Increased transparency could be expected to strengthen people's interest in public matters, although they do not help village people, living far away from the nearest *Huduma.* (Wynche & nal, 2013) Markers of liminality can be traced. The digital divide is now inside the country, in the different options offered to urban and rural areas and different generation groups. In addition, the introduction of the mobile phone and *M-Pesa* also have created micro and macro dichotomies, challenging culture-based practices (Komen, 2015, 2016).

The mainstream journalism culture in Kenya has been a 'beacon of political change and truth-telling', allowing dissidence but also talking to those in power. Because of the multiple ties between politics, economy and journalism the media tend to bring journalism toward 'the silence of the lambs', according to some critics. (Namu, 2016; State of the Media in Kenya, 2015) However, the difference compared with neighbouring Tanzania is marked.

Tanzania is lagging behind in the application of ICT based activities, and simultaneously, the media sphere remains chaotic. Media institutions are many, and the majority operate in the language which the people command. The media use big headlines in its fight against corruption, but mainstream media based political debates are both rare and careful. The tabloids shout loud about 'accepted' problems, but a deeper analysis is missing.

There is an interesting contradiction in the development of mainstream media between the two countries. In a rough assessment, Tanzanian print media – noisy tabloids – get closer to the common person, while especially public broadcasting talks to the elites. In Kenya, the oppose takes place: the English-language newspapers with their strong emphasis on politics and economy focus on the elites, while popular radio and television with their varying-quality programmes and a language mix reach better to the common person. The print media have in recent years lost their readership, but this is partly a global trend. In Tanzania, readership statistics is not available, and it would be difficult to conclude much based on readership figures, because the field is so unstable.

The community media concentrate on a 'voice to the voiceless' ideology. Undoubtedly, community media could increase the social imaginary and interest in the political over the long run, but community media tend to exercise mini-scale conventional journalism with weak resources – but they also end up advocating harsh political causes as in some Kenyan cases. (Ogola 2015) Also the strong emphasis on education decreases interest. Over the years, African media have tried to 'teach' the African people so frequently that, although the composition is different in community media, the messages sound top/down again.

All in all, the present East African mediascapes allow considerably more space for the social imaginary, whereas it seems much more difficult to exercise genuine domestication. The communication sphere in Kenya is considerably more close to expanded social imaginary but still on its tiptoes about political opinion, while the Tanzanian mediascape is both limited, contradictory and out of focus, although in the language sphere domesticated.

Knocking on the doors of knowledge society

On a continent still saddled with a scarcity of communication modes, the emergence of ICT has seemed to offer a multitude of digital platforms for citizen participation. Some countries such as Kenya have already announced themselves as regional ICT hubs, and their governments have started both to plan ICT policies and to search for financial support for implementation. Indeed, today Kenya's Internet penetration reaches to 81% of the population, while in the whole of Africa, the average remains under 30% and in Tanzania far below the African average. (http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm) A real boom of policy documents has been formulated over the past 15–20 years.

At the crossroads (2005) covers the results of a project on Kenya ICT policy. The project, called 'Development El Dorado', did not succeed, and several authors try to find reasons for the failures and delays. There does not seem to be any reason for challenging the necessity of ICT development as such; the focus is on how to make it as smooth as possible.

Florence Etta (2005) claims that African policymaking is today less 'home-grown' than in the 1960s and 1970s. The main reasons for the lack of independent politics are SAP programmes. Simultaneously, with weakening economies, new technology emerged as a magic vehicle for improving services and strengthening democracy. Information and communication technology appears difficult to resist – but it requires resources. 'In no other of contemporary endeavour is the influence of donors more evident than in ICT policy planning. Most policy work […] has been or is being funded by donors', says Etta (2005, p. 9). Thus the planning of ICT policies has become a top/down project, partly thanks to donors and partly because the ICT has been understood as a technological project, implemented in the same way all over the world.

Survey on ICT and Education in Africa (2007) is based on 53 country reports. According to it, Africa is reaching a new phase, moving from projects to policies. Kenya is approaching the peak group of South Africa, Cameroon, Ghana, Mauritius and Botswana. Tanzania belongs to the laggards. The most important macro trends are multi-partnerships that involve private companies, open source software and a multiplicity of regional initiatives concerning e-schools and collaborative learning projects.

Over the past 10–15 years, it has been emphasised that the mobile phone has changed the quality of life in Sub-Saharan countries. The mobile phone is considered important for economic growth, marketing and the provision of services (Aker & Mbiti, 2010). However, the authors warn that mobile phone technology cannot serve as the 'silver bullet' for development. Mobile phone technology must work in partnership with other public good provisions and investments; alone it does not create social change.

Interestingly, documents by Kenyan institutions tend to be more critical about the implementation of ICT technology than donor reports (e.g. SIDA's *ICTs for Democracy*, 2009). Donors talk about 'risks', 'challenges' and 'uneven developments', but the basic tone is encouraging and positive. The SIDA report elaborates on good governance and freedom of speech as a dimension of democracy, thus reflecting Nordic discussions around development. The facts have been collected via country reports from Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. In the case of Kenya, the SIDA report states that the greatest challenge is the fact that ICT development is driven by private business, not the state or the citizenry. The report also notes the difference between the population in cities and in rural locales. However, the report sees in Kenya a chance for basic social changes. The society runs debates about how to promote ICT, while in Tanzania and Uganda, such an activity is minimal.

All ICT activity has this far occurred in English, because ICT vehicles have been adopted as packages. However, recently the ICT department of the Kenyan Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology has started plans to introduce the use of dominant local languages at *Huduma Centres* (Getao, personal communication, 2015). The plans have aroused concern about tribalism – the violent political clashes after the 2007 elections are fresh in people's minds.

In sum, the tone in the blueprints regarding ICT resembles policy documents from the 1960s, when new democracies advocated for the cause of development. Development was assumed to be understood in the same way everywhere. In the ICT blueprints, the significance of ICT is never challenged, and some of the plans – for example, the digitalisation of the whole school system in Kenya – are unrealistic. However, more than in the 1960s, internal criticism about implementation is also explicit.

From the perspective of social memory, the documents do not offer much. Citizens are most often called 'targets', 'customers' or 'grassroots' if they are mentioned at all. From this perspective, the slogan 'mobile phone revolution' appears misleading. There is no intimacy between the suggested revolution and the citizen, and in fact, the citizen is not directly invited to participate in the revolution. S/he is only provided with a variety of tools and vehicles. Yes, radio listening in Kenya has moved to the mobile phone. On one hand, this has supported the status of radio although television is expanding in towns; on the other, it has individualised radio listening, which previously was a community-based exercise.

Obijiofor (2015, pp. 249–251) emphasises that citizen activity and personal responsibility might bring into the picture liminal tendencies, a dramatic somersault of values – from community to individualism. However, perhaps the emphasis on services shows successful domestication. A Kenyan ICT planner feels that it is natural that the profile of progress is different in Kenya than in industrialised countries. Kenya proceeds with basic services, while the industrialised world can afford to invest in more abstract forms of knowledge society (Getao, personal communication, 2015). Easy money transfer, fast driving licence applications and less corruption can make a real change in the quality of life of people far from cities. On the other hand, a strong emphasis on citizen activism undoubtedly sounds dangerous in a society with political contradictions.

Another issue which has been discussed in recent years (e.g. Akinbobola, 2015; Kandie, personal communication, 2015) is the question of why ICT has been developed separately from media planning, both in Kenya and in Tanzania. ICT could strengthen the media in aspects which have thus far been weak: in decreasing top/down reporting, in spreading out from cities, in localising and in giving voice to the voiceless. Akinbobola's examples from West Africa are not very promising from the perspective of mobile phone revolution, however. He anticipates that the radio, not social media, will also in the future be the main mass medium in Africa.

Conclusive remarks

The above impressions about the Eastern African mediascapes do not promise much operational space for Mouffe's 'the political' (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 48–52). Her elegant criticism of consensual democracy and proposals of radicalisation do not fit too well with the developments in the East African public sphere. Mouffe tends to invest in state institutions. So does East African politics; but Mouffe's perception of democracy is processual, without moments of discontinuity, while especially the Tanzanian social developments over the past 50–60 years have been characterised

by sharp turns and discontinuities. Kenya fits better in the Mouffe considerations, although also there are disjunctures embedded – actually more deep going than in Tanzania.

If a somewhat vulgar interpretation is allowed, one could claim that Mouffe's democracy is based on tensions and negotiations between state institutions and individuals, who, of course, in turn, might belong to various groups. The will of the state is mediated via a complex set of actors in politics, education, the economy and the media. In Africa, the social order is characterised by negotiations between authorities – dominantly state institutions, partly others – and communities. The media do not represent the citizens, because they reach only to a limited part of the population on a regular basis. The media have been controlled and regulated, but they have also deliberatively adopted the same tone as the decision-making that is top/down and lacking negotiation.

The counter-force to top/down politics in Eastern Africa is the community, togetherness. In Kenyan urban settings, the community is partly becoming virtual, but the community still exists. In Tanzania, the community axis is stronger, but so is also the state. The role of the media as representatives of the citizen communities is weak; despite the headline rhetoric, the media tend to attach more to the state.

The laces that tie the society together that Castoriadis (1975, p. 224) talks about are easy to distinguish in Kenyan and Tanzanian societies and in the mediascapes that reflect the social memory. The laces are predominantly authoritarian. But has the imagination turned into social practice as Appadurai (1996) requires? A prerequisite for such a development are social practices designed according to the needs of the society in question. The perhaps most astonishing aspect of the governments and the media in both of the East African societies is the fact that locality has not taken off. The dangers experienced during nation-building have a long shadow.

Accordingly, it is perhaps best to discard Mouffe and Appadurai. Instead, I try to interpret Galtung's (1999) considerations. He has introduced a picture of the relationships between three actors in society: the state, the market and civil society (Figure 1). According to Galtung, the ideal place for the media would be in the middle of the three, receiving and sending messages to all. But the author admits that this is rarely the case; the media tend to attach to the state or the market, more rarely to civil society.

(Figure 1 about here)

Interpreted through African evidence, the media have been close to the state, in Kenya close and in Tanzania, very close. Now there is a recognisable move, in Kenya a move towards civil society but simultaneously and more strongly towards the market. In Tanzania, the move is recognizable but weaker – in fact, the move toward the civil society is quite weak as long as conventional media are concerned.

In this process, ICT has a crucial role. The mobile phone revolution opens doors but is financially controlled to a large extent by the market. There is not much space for domestication. However, the avoidance of localisation cannot alone be explained money. It goes deeper in history and its contradictions. African societies are layered as American sandwiches. But the civil society is also changing. Traditions are weakening and getting compensated by communities following other

logic. Individualism is preached by rappers as well as community radio agitators. In this sense, both societies are in a liminal stage or approaching it.

An addition should be made to Galtung's figure: the media ball in the middle should be considerably smaller. The political order in East African societies has demanded obedience from the side of the media for decades. The main reason is the modest size of the mediascape. In societies such as Kenya where the media have a long history of diversity and sizable volume it has been easier to invest in a multiplicity of voices. The size of the society is not always decisive: the country that has for years been number one on the continent in media freedom indexes is Namibia. Quite interestingly, the values of a debating mediascape were inherited from apartheid South Africa, and the media participated in the liberation struggle. The transition to independence was not smooth, but a history of dialogue now allows participatory radio programmes, creates SMS pages even in government publications and drives the media ombudsman system to sustainable performance.

East Africa has a long way to go. Binyavanga Wainaina (2008, p. 17) has assessed Kenyan journalism in the following way: 'Our media is obsessed with the soap opera of political characters. So Kenya is really just a theatre-screen where we watch a few people play drama games on stage, and clap, or cry or laugh.' Kenyan media publicity is an elite exercise. Today, a part of the clapping or laughing audience operates online, but citizens still remain as an audience.

As undemocratic and unfair as this sounds, societies with a relatively strong media history seem to have a shorter way to find a balance between top/down and bottom/up tensions in the future mediascape. The social imaginary requires time to develop. On the other hand, ICT poses a challenge to both Kenya and Tanzania. It is justified to determine that the emphasis on services is right, because so much is missing in this dimension, especially in the rural areas and poor suburbs. But if decision-makers do not admit that they also are concerned about the potential of citizen activism coming with social media and radical websites, they are not being honest. Many decision-makers have inherited an oversized social memory of unrest and disorder, and this is why ICT has been kept separate from media policies.

An additional dimension to the challenges is the role of media languages. They are double totems of history in regard to present decisions. They represent colonialism but also tribalism. In Tanzania, the state has chosen Kiswahili and thus the media dare to speak the people's language, although groups using other vernaculars say that Kiswahili kills their culture. On the other hand, Kiswahili is a 'national glue' for tribal contradictions. Carol Myers-Scotton (e.g. 1971) has shown in her intriguing sociolinguistic studies about African multilingualism, how complicated language choices are not only for decision-makers but also for the social identity of people. Tanzania is a nation to a higher degree than Kenya. People belong to tribes but they mainly represent social memory, belonging and security. The careful proceeding toward Kiswahili in Kenya tells that tensions between English, Kiswahili and other local languages continue. Frequently tribe-based contradictions emerge also in the state machinery and politics. It is perhaps justified to say that Kenya is more a state than a nation, more advanced than Tanzania as a state, but including ethnic contradictions which do not represent security alone. Kenya appears more as a top/down society, effective but distant for the individual citizen.

All African societies have several social orders on the top of each other but compositions differ. For successful media policies, they should be included in one way or the other. In Tanzania, the biggest challenge for policymakers is to get the system running, because there is a long tradition of ignoring policy statements. In Kenya, the challenge is more complicated. The system should allow

the ordinary person to step in the media landscape more properly than today. The state is running, the media are running, but there are quite a few contradictory elements in the social memory. The social media are not necessarily helping in this aspect. As journalist Steve Omondi (The Nation Nov.30, 2016) says, social media are the digital forest of mediocrity.

The braiding of the social memory and social imaginary cannot succeed without voices that speak the language that the people understand, but diversity of cultures should also flourish – and the challenge of globalisation exercises extra pressure. Social media alone hardly bring a solution to this problem. In the African circumstances, public radio could probably best operate as a flagship for an alert language balance, together with online activism. A dream? Perhaps, but who dares to try?

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